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ADDRESS

BY

VICE ADMIRAL ALFRED G. WARD, USN

COMMANDER SECOND FLEET

AT

THE SURF CLUB

FEBRUARY 16, 1963

"SEA POWER IN THE CUBAN CRISIS"

When I was informed by Admiral Anderson's office that the Committee of One Hundred would welcome a visit by a major ship of the Second Fleet about this time of the year, I was an enthusiastic volunteer to bring in the flagship. I had learned of Admiral Anderson's warm reception here last year and his high regard for members of the Committee of One Hundred, both collectively and individually. Neither my wife nor I have been in this area before, and this provided us an opportunity to find out why so many smart people in these United States come to the Miami/Miami Beach/Fort Lauderdale area in the wintertime. In the short time we have been here, we have found that answer. You may be assured that this will not be our last visit to this area. We hope that we may contribute in some small measure to the objectives of the Committee of One Hundred of bringing together, under the banner of friendliness and good will, men who have broad interest in human progress, believe in real fellowship, and desire the betterment of this area.

We are well aware of the problems and the challenges facing the people of Southern Florida with the Cuban situation and in the many aspects of that situation. We know of the adjustments that have to be made by the displaced citizens of that country who are having to make new lives for themselves in order to remain free. We know, too, of the problems generated here by an influx of people who have not had the same language or the same heritage that belong to us.

I am interested in the Cuban situation because of my previous association with the crisis that started on October 22nd, and because of the fact that I command a fleet which would undoubtedly be a part of any United States effort should the military become involved in carrying out our national objectives in this area. Of interest to you is that today and every day there are units of the Second Fleet in this area; there are units in the Puerto Rican area; we continue to maintain a sizeable number of ships in training at Guantanamo; and we are privileged to send our ships into this great area for rest, relaxation and surcease from our work at sea. The Miami/Fort Lauderdale area ranks at the top in the choice of our men as a port of call. Your climate, your friendliness, your understanding and your hospitality make the lives of our officers and our men more enjoyable and rewarding.

The Cuban crisis was the most significant event on the military scene in 1962 and, in my opinion, was the single most important episode in the history of the world during that year. This evening I would like to talk to you about the Cuban crisis in three phases:

The first, a description of the role played by military forces in the crisis, including some personal observations of actions at the scene of Quarantine Force operations;

Second, the immediate results of the crisis; and

Third, a study of a few of the lessons learned or, to state this in other words, some analyses of the effects of the crisis.

The Navy's role in the Cuban crisis was described in an editorial in the Norfolk-Virginian Pilot on October 30. I would like to quote some extracts from that editorial:

"President Kennedy's choice of a naval quarantine as the backbone of United States resistance to the Soviet Union's missile bases in Cuba will fascinate the historians of sea power. The measure was selected as an alternative, or as preliminary, to an attack on the offending weapons. Events have indicated how awkward was the position in which it placed the Kremlin.

"The history of the blockade, including the so-called pacific blockade, has been reviewed in these columns. The point has been made that in this nuclear age, military and diplomatic precedents are all but valueless and the classic definitions lose their meaning. Mr. Kennedy simply seized upon the most effective measure, short of violence, that he judged to be available to him.

"The significance of what the President did lies not in the past but in the present. That is according to the demands of the times. He seized from Mr. Khrushchev the initiative and strapped upon him a choice far more bitter than the one he had resolved by ordering a blockading force into the Caribbean rather than by shooting.

"Mr. Khrushchev's . . . apparent willingness to pull in his horns with as much grace as he can muster is, therefore, another tribute to the U. S. Navy's strength and readiness. The Navy's performance has been none the less dramatic for its being carried out so near to home bases and command centers. Our fleets have demonstrated many times in the Cold War — off Lebanon and in the Formosa Straits, to take two outstanding examples — a capacity to deal effectively with crisis.

"Navy Day went almost unnoticed Saturday while Task Force 136 guarded the sea approaches to Cuba. But the nation's gratitude to its sea arm, and its satisfaction in its control of the seas, makes every day of this continuing crisis a Navy Day."

Let me repeat a part of the story of the Quarantine Force.

I relieved Admiral Jack Taylor as Commander Second Fleet on Saturday, October 20. I spent the rest of that weekend with Admiral Dennison at his headquarters and in the Pentagon.

On Monday morning at 0830 I held a conference of commanding officers and unit commanders of cruisers, destroyers and escort ships based in Norfolk. Admiral Ailes held a similar conference in Charleston with commanders of his destroyers there. These captains were informed for the first time that the President would make an address to the nation that evening, that their ships were being assigned to the Quarantine Force and that they were to sail that day for an indefinite period. Some of these ships had recently returned from the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and had many men on vacation. Not one Captain expressed any opposition to being directed to sail on short notice. They all went

about their business of recalling men on leave in the local Tidewater area, of loading urgently needed supplies and equipment and of getting ready. Some ships who had large numbers of men on leave borrowed men from ships undergoing major overhaul in the shipyard. The general consensus was to the effect that they were privileged to serve their country in a time of crisis and to be able to contribute to the attainment of our national objectives. You could have been proud of them; I was.

The President did make his speech on that memorable Monday evening. the ships did sail on schedule on that same evening, the President's quarantine proclamation was signed the next day, Tuesday, to be effective on Wednesday morning; and after a 27-knot speed of advance, ships were on station, on time, on the quarantine line ready to carry out their orders.

During the next month the Quarantine Force intercepted Soviet and Communist Bloc ships and ships under charter to the Soviet Government headed for Cuba, and intercepted and photographed Soviet ships leaving Cuba.

In general the ships that were stopped were cooperative. There were no unpleasant incidents that adversely affected the accomplishment of our mission. This, I believe, reflects favorably on the caliber of the Masters of the merchantmen flying the flags of many countries, including the Soviet Union, and also is a tribute to the awareness of our officers and men of the U. S. Navy of the sensitive nature of their mission. Let me relate a few examples —

The decision was made by the U. S. government that a boarding party should inspect the Lebanese freighter MARUCLA. The destroyer JOHN R. PIERCE made the intercept just after dark. Since boarding under any conditions would be tricky, and inspection during darkness only partially effective at best, it was decided to postpone boarding until daylight. A nearby destroyer, JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, JR., with a division commander embarked, was ordered to join PIERCE. The boarding party included the Executive Officers of both destroyers. The men were dressed in their Dress Whites, were unarmed, and presented a smart military appearance. The inspection was conducted smartly and effectively. No prohibited cargoes were found and the ship was cleared to proceed. There was no hostility or personal antipathy in evidence. There were smiles, greetings and some handshakes.

In order to take good photographs, intercepting ships necessarily had to approach quite close to the Merchantmen; sometimes possibly alarmingly so. The destroyer BIDDLE came close to the Soviet ship KOMSOVOL carrying missiles out of Cuba, with the Soviet ship sounding the danger signal by several short blasts on his whistle. The destroyer maintained his close position until the pictures were taken. They were good. Initially the KOMSOVOL Master spoke over voice radio in poor but understandable English. A U. S. Naval officer in BIDDLE replied in Russian. The Master's next message was in Russian with the BIDDLE replying in English. This change of language repeated itself several times, apparently enjoyed by both. Captain Roth of the BIDDLE invited the Soviet Master to come aboard for lunch. After a long silence the Master replied that he had a previous commitment.

When NEWPORT NEWS intercepted the Soviet tanker POLZONOV, good morning messages, using signal flags and the International Code, were exchanged. Voice communications were established with English language being spoken. The Soviet Master expressed sympathy in the death of Eleanor Roosevelt. When asked to uncover the missiles on deck, he stated that he had been intercepted by a U. S. warship on the previous day and had been cleared, but without delay he proceeded to remove part of the tarpaulins, exposing missile cases to view. When the NEWPORT NEWS helicopter passed close over the ship with passengers in the helo hanging out of the doors taking pictures, many of the more than 50 young men on deck waved greetings. Most of these men looked to be of college age and were dressed either in sport shirts and slacks or in shorts with no shirts. They were nice looking with good physiques, looking not unlike our own sailors-men. In departing NEWPORT NEWS sent: "WISH YOU GOOD SAILING ON YOUR TRIP HOME. GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK." The POLZONOV replied, "THANKS TO YOU. GOODBYE."

The WASP intercepted the Soviet ship ALAPAYEVSK. Communications were good. The U. S. officer in the helicopter over the ship spoke in Russian, with the Soviets replying in good English. There were about 200 young men on deck, many not wearing shirts. They appeared friendly and almost jubilant. Perhaps they were missile crews happy to be going home. The helo hovered over the ship twice. There was much waving of hands in greeting. Captain Middleton, the Chief of Staff to Admiral Buie, was in the helicopter, took off his tie clasp and lowered it on a line to the deck as a gesture of good will. A short time later the helo was motioned over the ship by the men on deck and, when a line was lowered, a gift of a bottle of vodka was attached. I'm reluctant to tell this story, since if I'm asked what happened to the vodka on board a dry ship of the Quarantine Force I must admit I don't know.

I believe history will acknowledge that the Quarantine Force was effective in accomplishing the tasks assigned.

As you know, our tasks were made easier by the decision of the Soviet government to respect the quarantine and to turn back many of their ships headed for Cuba.

No one could guess what the reaction of the Soviet government would be, so the United States forces had to be prepared for general war, for possible Soviet reprisal actions in Berlin or South Vietnam, or for any combination of offensive communist moves. While Task Force 136, the Quarantine Force under my command, was doing its assigned job, there were other powerful military forces in position of immediate readiness.

U. S. Navy forces included Task Force 135, consisting of two powerful attack carrier groups centered around the nuclear-powered ENTERPRISE and the USS INDEPENDENCE, both groups with their own destroyer screens and logistic resupply ships. These groups operated to the South of Cuba.

The Amphibious Force loaded the U. S. Marines of the Fleet Marine Force of the Atlantic Fleet and remained at sea. This landing force was augmented by a powerful brigade from the Fleet Marine Force based in Southern California.

As you know, wives and children were evacuated from our base at Guantanamo Bay, but the total base population was swelled by strong U. S. Marine defensive units.

U. S. Marine aircraft were positioned within striking distance.

Admiral Whitey Taylor's Anti-Submarine Warfare force put up on a maximum effort both to conduct ASW and also to locate and track Soviet merchantmen. These forces detected Soviet submarines and maintained contact until submarine exhaustion, forcing the subs to surface to recharge batteries. The Navy patrol aircraft, assisted by SAC aircraft, maintained surveillance over the broad ocean areas between Europe and Cuba and reported locations and movements of Bloc shipping, thereby making my job easier.

The U. S. Air Force increased the alert measures for the strategic retaliatory force and positioned tactical aircraft at bases in Florida within striking distance.

As you also know, we increased our surveillance effort, using U. S. Air Force and U. S. Navy aircraft. The President awarded medals to many of these pilots. Some U. S. Army forces were moved to staging areas and much Army equipment was prepositioned.

As I have indicated, this was a big operation, involving large forces. My staff tells me that 63 ships at one time or another participated in the Quarantine Force alone, and that 183 ships were at sea in the Atlantic and the Caribbean during the operation. Over 33,000 marines and large numbers of army and air force personnel were displaced from home bases.

The Navy maintained a posture of readiness for "limited and general war objectives." Admiral Dennison as the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Command could schedule his component Army, Navy and Air Force forces to fulfill any commitments required. It would seem improbable that these readiness measures went unnoticed in the Kremlin.

An international aspect was provided by Task Force 137, a force charged with establishment of a quarantine line between Puerto Rico and the northern coast of South America. As you remember, there was convened in Washington on October 23, the day after the President's report to the Nation, an urgent meeting of the Council of the Organization of American States and the free nations of the Western Hemisphere, acting collectively under the Rio Treaty, and they were unanimous in strong action to meet the Soviet threat. The Council of the OAS, in its resolution of October 23, called for the immediate dismantling and withdrawal from Cuba of all missiles and other weapons with offensive capability and recommended that the member states take all measures to ensure that the Government of Cuba cannot continue to receive from the Sino-Soviet powers military material and related supplies which may threaten the peace and security of the Continent and to prevent the missiles in Cuba with offensive capability from ever becoming an active threat to the peace and security of the Continent. The OAS stand was another key factor in inducing the Soviet Union to withdraw its weapons from Cuba. The Rio Treaty and all other collective arrangements of the inter-American system remain in full force.

As a result of this action, the majority of the free states of the Western Hemisphere agreed to make contributions toward the attainment of these goals. Argentina immediately dispatched at maximum speed two destroyers. Venezuela provided two ships, as did the Dominican Republic. These six destroyer types plus the U.S. destroyer MULLINNIX formed Task Force 137 under the command of Admiral Tyree.

Now, what were the Immediate Results of these actions? First, U. S. strength and firmness resulted in the USSR backing down on its program of arming Cuba. The Soviet Union, with the complicity and acquiescence of the Cuban Communist regime, had posed a threat to the peace and security of the Western Hemisphere and had attempted to upset the balance of power by secretly placing offensive weapons systems in Cuba with capacity to wreak nuclear havoc on large areas of North, Central and South America. The U. S. acted calmly and forcefully but left room for a solution short of war, and the Soviet Union demonstrated its respect for U. S. power.

Second, Castro proved that he is not a free agent, but a puppet of the USSR. The Cuban people, who had already lost their freedom, now saw that their government had lost its independence. Cuba is a communist outpost in the hemisphere.

The offensive weapons were installed to serve Soviet purposes; they were controlled by the Soviets; they were removed by the Soviets as a result of negotiations between the U.S. and the USSR. At one time Castro claimed the IL-28 bombers were Cuban property, he had to reverse himself completely on this point.

Third, U. S. statesmanship and power won out. By mounting a limited quarantine the U.S. displayed its traditional respect for human life and values. The quarantine was intended to keep out offensive weapons only, and this limited objective was attained.

Fourth, The OAS found the Cuban communist regime to be "incompatible with the principles and objectives of the Inter-American system". The OAS was greatly strengthened and given new meaning by actions taken as a result of the Cuban crisis.

Fifth, Employment of sea power in this case did not cause escalation of the opposing power struggle into a shooting war and yet it did provide the elements required for success in attaining national objectives.

Sixth, Our principal NATO allies pledged support to the actions taken by the U.S. government and were heartened by the demonstrated willingness of the U.S. to fight if necessary to gain objectives considered to be vital. This crisis tended to strengthen the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Seventh, Negotiations were largely carried out within the form and framework of the United Nations. The Secretary General, Mr. U Thant, conducted negotiations in UN headquarters in New York and in Havana. It is noteworthy that President Kennedy in his State of the Union message at the outset of 1963 stated that one of the four platform for progress in international affairs is full

and continued support of the United Nations. He stated, "Today the United Nations is primarily the protector of the small and the weak, and a safety valve for the strong. Tomorrow it can form the framework for a world of law".

Eighth, A new rule of the international law of the sea has come into being and has been accepted by all principal states. Traditionally and in accordance with international law a BLOCKADE is an act of war, designed to force an enemy state to comply with the will of a blockading country. In contrast, a QUARANTINE is a selective effort to deal with a specific threat to peace. The Cuban Quarantine was imposed in accordance with the resolution of the Council of the OAS and the terms of the Rio Treaty. The Quarantine was respected by all states, including the USSR and will henceforth be a part of the code we call international law.

Another immediate result is the increased level of command and control of military operations from Washington. There was a time when military affairs were the primary if not the sole concern of generals and admirals. This period ended with the beginning of World War I, which ushered in what has been described as the totalitarianization of war. The necessity for coordinating the whole resources of a nation toward a specific objective has become too vast to be handled effectively by one class of leaders. It has become the responsibility of the whole people and the government. As Clemenceau put it in the First World War "war is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to Generals."

During the recent Cuban crisis, I, as Commander of the Quarantine Force, was in direct communication by telephone (High Command Net) with Admiral Dennison in Norfolk and with the office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington. What happened on the quarantine line influenced reactions in Moscow, in the United Nations, and in the Organization of American States.

Admiral Anderson has this to say:

"During recent weeks I have been privileged to be associated with the events which have occupied the minds, the attention, and the prayers of Americans and many others in other countries of the world. Never before have I been so impressed with the intimate relationship between the application of military power and the political power and policy of our country. Twice each day, as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I met with my colleagues; we've met daily with the Secretary of Defense and on occasion with higher officials of our Government and with the President of the United States. I can attest to you the great devotion of every single one of these officials and officers, their dedication to your welfare, to the preservation of the honor and the security of the United States, the things which we hold dear."

In attempting to analyze long range effects of the Cuban crisis, I would like to limit my thoughts to three principal subjects and mention each only briefly:

FIRST — The Cuban problem is not over but events to date seem to have had a disrupting influence to the solidarity of the Communist Bloc. Withdrawal of offensive weapons from Cuba has not solved the problem of the presence in Cuba of a Communist dictatorship or the use of Cuba as a base for Communist subversion and aggression. The continued presence in Cuba of about 17,000

Soviet military personnel casts a continuing intervention of foreign military power in this hemisphere. In his December 29 speech at Miami to Cuban refugees, the President said:

"It is the strongest wish of the people of this country as well as the people in this hemisphere that Cuba shall one day be free again."

While the alliances within the free world, and particularly the NATO and OAS alliances, have been strengthened, there seems to be growing evidences of rifts between Communist China and the Kremlin and some increased disaffection between communist parties in undeveloped nations and their masters in the USSR. South and Central American nations in particular are seeming to take increased measures to control communist minorities in their countries. Mr. Khrushchev seems to be a little more amenable toward attempting to reach some solutions, albeit possibly temporary ones, with the West. This does not mean that the Cold War is over. We must continue to maintain our guard and our strength.

SECOND — The military forces of the United States demonstrated their immediate readiness to accomplish missions and objectives prescribed by the President and to meet the commitments necessary to maintain our free way of life. Again I quote Admiral Anderson:

"The entire operation has been a magnificent testimonial not only to the senior leaders of our Government, but also to those commanders and commanding officers at lower levels who were so quickly able to move their troops — large number of troops — their ships — many ships — and their aircraft of many types in position to carry out lengthy, tedious, and often very sensitive operations with a high degree of leadership, professional competence, courage, and diplomatic skill."

I would like to add that the men in the ships were superb. During the period in which we were short-handed as a result of sailing with reduced numbers of men on board, individuals had to double-up on watches and be on duty many long hours every day. I have never known morale in the services to be higher. As indicated earlier, there was an underlying feeling of pride in serving their country and of contributing to the attainment of national objectives by each and every one on board the ships of the Quarantine Force. I am told by my Army and Air Force compatriots that this high morale and dedication of purpose was also in evidence in their forces.

The THIRD and final general conclusion pertains to sea power. An editorial in the Charleston, South Carolina newspaper, "The News and Courier" of December 18th states, and I quote:

"Thinking people in the country should try to make their own assessment of the secret of national power. They pay for that power by means of taxes.

"Perhaps the key lesson of the Cuban crisis is that sea power remains the dominant force in world affairs.

"A powerful case can be presented to show that control of the oceans is the deciding factor in the Cold War. This truth should not be overlooked by citizens whose security is being protected at sea."

By a judicious combination of its multi-purpose units, sea power is able to apply measured force which can cope with provocative situations as circumstances dictate. No greater force need be employed than is necessary to achieve the objective. As proven in the Cuban crisis employment of sea power is less likely to cause escalation of limited or cold war. I agree with the statement made by Admiral Anderson that "the versatility, the flexibility, the mobility and, above all, the readiness and spirit of our Navy are indeed assets of which I believe our country can be justly proud."

And, in conclusion, one final thought: U.S. strength and firmness in the Cuban crisis won out. We should never forget the advice given us by President Theodore Roosevelt when he said:

"If we stand idly by . . . if we shrink from hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger people will pass us by and will win for themselves the domination of the world."